

*R. J.*  
SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 1872.

Subject: The Burning of the Books.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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### CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

I. The Duty of Using One's Life for Others. II. The God of Comfort. III. The Nobility of Concession. IV. Self-Control Possible to All. V. Pillars, and his Modern Imitators. VI. The Strong to Bear with the Weak. VII. Growth in the Knowledge of God. VIII. Contentment in all Things. IX. Abhorrence of Evil. X. Privileges of the Christian. XI. The Love of Money. XII. Divine Influence on the Human Soul. XIII. Moral Affinity, the True Ground of Unity. XIV. The Value of Deep Feelings. XV. Works Meet for Repentance. XVI. Malign Spiritual Influences. XVII. The Old and the New. XVIII. The Hidden Christ. XIX. Well-Wishing not Well-Doing. XX. Sphere of the Christian Minister. XXI. Suffering, the Measure of Worth. XXII. The Victory of Hope in Sorrow. XXIII. The Crime of Degrading Men. XXIV. Self-Conceit in Morals. XXV. Morality, the Basis of Piety. XXVI. The Trinity. XXVII. The Family, as an American Institution.

### CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

I. The Way of Coming to Christ. II. Conduct, the Index of Feeling. III. The Sympathy of Christ. IV. Retribution and Reformation. V. Counting the Cost. VI. Scope and Function of a Christian Life. VII. Human Ideas of God. VIII. The Graciousness of Christ. IX. Evils of Anxious Forethought. X. The Beauty of Moral Qualities. XI. The Problem of Joy and Suffering in Life. XII. The Apostolic Theory of Preaching. XIII. The Right and the Wrong Way of Giving Pleasure. XIV. The Perfect Manhood. XV. Disstimulating Love. XVI. The Door. XVII. Moral Theory of Civil Liberty. XVIII. Peaceableness. XIX. Soul-Drifting. XX. The Hidden Life. XXI. Discouragements and Comforts in Christian Life. XXII. Hindrances to Christian Development. XXIII. Loving and Hating. XXIV. Authority of Right over Wrong. XXV. The Power of Love. XXVI. The Preciousness of Christ.

### CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

I. Watchfulness. II. Paul and Demetrius. III. Consolations of the Suffering of Christ. IV. Treasure that Cannot be Stolen. V. Bearing, but not Overborne. VI. The Holy Spirit. VII. Ideal Standard of Duty. VIII. Faults. IX. The Comforting God. X. The Name Above Every Name. XI. National Unity. XII. Social Obstacles to Religion. XIII. Christ, the Deliverer. XIV. The God of Pity. XV. Sin Against the Holy Ghost. XVI. Inheritance of the Meek. XVII. Memorials of Divine Mercy. XVIII. The Victorious Power of Faith. XIX. The Peace of God. XX. Coming to One's Self. XXI. Fragments of Instruction. XXII. The Substance of Christianity. XXIII. Spiritual Blindness. XXIV. Perfect Peace. XXV. Preparation for Death. XXVI. Fidelity to Conviction.

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## THE BURNING OF THE BOOKS.

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"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews [the wandering Jews], exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth."—ACTS, XIX., 11-13.

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That was the fashion of exorcism. Some peculiar formula of words was supposed to contain in it a power which could not be resisted by the evil spirits, or a fascination which could not be resisted by good spirits, and which drew them to the service of him who uttered it. It was very natural, therefore, for these men to suppose that Paul was only another mightier exorcist of their own sort. When they saw the effect which followed his use of the name of Jesus, they thought that if they only used that name the same results would follow.

"And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so."

What came of it, you will see.

"And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."

It is not to be supposed that there was an intelligent conviction in respect to the office, or the blessings which attended the use of the name of Christ; and this heedless and wanton use of Christ's name as a mere exorcism was rebuked. The apostles stood before the great mass of the people of the city as men of supereminent influence in things invisible.

"And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

It is computed that the books were worth, according to this estimate, not far from nine thousand dollars in our currency.

Ephesus was a Greek colonial city of no mean repute. It was the very head-quarters of what may be called the *black art*. *Ephesia Grammata* had become a technical phrase to signify Ephesian letters, or books, or writings. It represented all that kind of writing which had to do with amulets, and charms, and exorcisms, and fortune-telling, and the whole round and range of that pernicious but very fascinating life.

This professional life, which consisted in the interpretation of dreams, included a very wide field for superstition and for deceit. In all ages of the world men have been very curious about their dreams; and in all communities there are many who put great stress upon them. They are regarded as signs, either contrary or coincident, as the case may be. There are multitudes who long to have them interpreted; and it is a thriving profession that interprets them.

Astrology was then employed, also, as an instrument of fortune-telling. Palm-searching, ceromancy, all forms of telling fortunes, prevailed.

And there were not wanting those who could, or who pretended that they could, pry open the door of the future, and tell them what there was there.

This art embraced all manner of amulets, and the construction of them. It included all sorts of shapes, forms, and the meanings which were attached to them. Sometimes precious metals and odorous substances were employed. All writings that were meant to be worn upon the body, and that were supposed to carry in them a secret magical power, were included. There was supposed to be infused in this writing a force which was an effectual preventive of disease. It was supposed to have the ability to ward off effectually all surprises and all disasters. Men bought amulets, and bound them about them when they were going to sea, in order that they might not be shipwrecked. Men, when they were going on dangerous journeys, bought amulets for their protection from robbers. Men bought amulets and carried them on their persons in order that they might not take contagious diseases. They were employed to keep off the measles and such like diseases from children. Men wanted them for every such purpose. And where there is a want there will always be a supply in the market. As long as men are superstitious and want a charm which shall deliver them from all manner of evils, there will be those who will furnish it. And that city was the head-quarters of this kind of superstition and literature and abomination.



No one needs to be told that as there is fascination on the part of the dupes, so there is provocation on the part of the man that manages the dupes, to deceive them for his own good, and that he leads them on in the way of deception as long as he can, or until he accomplishes his object.

In all ages and nations, therefore, there has been this profession. Among the Hebrews, from the earliest day, witchcraft and the practice of the arts of magic were crimes against the State. They were treason to God, and they were punishable with death. Yet, they were never eradicated. You will recollect how Saul, when he was in an extremity, sought out a wizard—the witch of Endor—who seems to have been well known to his courtiers, or he could not so easily have found her out.

This is still so; for although persons who follow this profession are disreputable, multitudes of such creatures skulk in our cities. There are not only the seven sons of Sceva—like those vagabond Jews—going about and practicing these miserable arts, but there are seven thousand, and ten times seven thousand. All over the world there are still men of this class, who play upon the superstitions and hopes of men, and dupe them to their own profit and to the victims' harm.

It seems that a kind of revival of religion broke out among this people. You cannot imagine a people so little likely to be affected by the preaching of the Gospel; and it does not seem to have been the ordinary preaching of the Gospel that did affect them. They were seized with conviction through their own methods, and on their own account.

The apostle Paul was manifestly looked upon as of superior authority and power; and the result of the exalted opinion which was held of him was beneficent. His miracles were so impressive that men attempted to imitate them, not only, but that when the attempt brought upon these pretenders such condign punishment men feared, and at the same time were convicted that the way in which they had lived in respect to these very things was a pernicious and guilty way. And they gathered up all their charms and amulets, all their secret writings, all their books of various kinds, and did as men ought always to do when they have done wrong—went and publicly confessed their wrong. One of them came to Paul, saying, "Behold, from year to year I have practiced this base business, and gained much money, and sinned; and I confess my guilt." Another came and said, "I have wallowed in licentiousness, and have lived for the gratification of the lowest passions,

without regard to the welfare of other men; and I confess." Another came, and made confession. The confessing spirit became contagious. And all that confessed brought the instruments of their wickedness and threw them down. By and by they were all heaped up in an open place. Then the torch was put to the mass, and it was burned to ashes.

By this incrimination there was much mischief forestalled. There was, also, in this overt testimony of these men, a committing of themselves—a renunciation of that which was bad, and an adhesion to that which was good—that everybody could understand; and it was wholesome to those who beheld it. Their example was valuable to the ensnared common people. Although it is impossible to produce by mere human agency great effects; yet, when a man's soul is lifted up, and kindled by the Spirit of God, it is competent to produce on men searching and cleansing effects. It is one thing to stimulate men; it is one thing to arouse men: it is another thing to lead men from a lower plane to a higher, and to commit them there, so that they shall grow in grace. Growth in grace is given to men only by the Holy Ghost. It is the power of the Highest, acting through the human soul, that gives that beneficent influence which preaching and the preacher have over the imagination and the reason and the affections, and, subsequently, over the life itself.

This open renunciation, and this burning of so much treasure, was itself not only an evidence of sincerity, but a powerful testimony to all that were around about. After all, it is not so much what men *feel*, as what they *do*, that affects their fellow-men. It is not so much the Gospel adapted to the thoughts and the reason. There is many a man who is not competent to accept the Gospel in its higher range of spiritual truths. There is many a man who beholds the transcendent experience which one has on entering the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ with suspicion and with doubt; but there are very few men who see a reformation of morals, who see a man going against the grain and against his own interests for the sake of doing right, that they are not convinced that he has undergone a change which is worth having.

These men had laid aside their professional instruments. Everybody knew that. They were proud of their power, and of their success; and yet they laid aside these things. They gave up all their chance of gain. They discontinued their business. They stopped, in a moment, the inflowing of money and the worship of those who paid homage to them ignorantly and superstitiously.



They did it openly. They did it at a great cost. They destroyed the implements by which they had been gaining their livelihood.

There were many men that would not have been moved by the story of Christ and the crucifixion, who were brought to understand by this practical example the regenerating power of the Spirit as applied to men. They saw that these men who had been through various gradations of wickedness had been lifted into a realm where they confessed their sins, and owned before men their guilt, their corruption, their wrong-doing.

There was something in the burning of these books that was calculated to excite men; that was calculated to stir them up by the roots, as it were; to tear up their old habits; to give them a new shame that made them ashamed of their old unshame. In this bringing a man out on another line of life, and causing him to commit himself before all mankind, there is something very influential; and there are large classes of people of little culture to whom it is about the only Gospel that can be preached in their own tongue. Therefore it is, that it is not enough when a man is converted in his business, for him to creep silently into the church, and to say, "I have been a very wicked man; I have abandoned, however, all my wickedness; but I will be modest, and not say anything about it." When a man abandons a notorious, wicked life, there is a Gospel in confession.

Have you been a hard master? Have you been an avaricious man? Are you known to be such? Have you the reputation of being such? And do you think that the grace of God has found you? Do you think that hereafter you are going to lead a different life? And do you say, "I am going into the church, and men shall see by my example that I am a changed man"? It is better that they should hear it from your own lips, and see it corroborated afterward in your life. By the lips you are to confess.

Two things God requires of all men. One is that they shall forsake sin. The other is that they shall openly confess that they have sinned. The Gospel not only says that men shall reform, if they have been going wrong, but that they shall confess their wrong-doing. If you have sinned openly, you are bound to make confession of your sin as openly. If you have been committed on the side of evil, you are not to be ashamed that you are now committed on the side of good. You are an enemy to your old selves. You are bound to stand up and condemn your past sins and wicked courses. You are bound to turn your back upon your evil habits. And you are bound to do it openly.

It is a bad thing for a man to sneak into the kingdom of God.

A man who has served Satan with his head up, ought to serve the Lord Jesus Christ with an open face and with his head up. God deserves as much at your hands as the devil does; and an openly wicked man who has renounced his wickedness ought to let his neighbors know it. When you turn away from that which is bad in your lives, you ought not to be ashamed to acknowledge it before men.

This sudden turning of these men in the sight of the apostle's miracles, and in the sight of the history of these seven sons of Sceva; this sudden revival in which there were so many men converted who gave evidence of their reformation, was the work of a luminous hour, an hour of great excitement, and an hour, as some would say, perhaps, of great precipitation. There are many men in this world who are afraid of excitement when it is an excitement that tends upward. I have very seldom seen a man who was afraid of excitement when it was an excitement in the direction of pleasure. I hear very few cautions on that subject. I seldom see men who are afraid of excitement on the subject of money. Ho! let it be known that there is a chance to invest; let it be known that stocks are depressed so that one who has the means can go in and buy and make his tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in a few days, and men spring, and rush, and are wild, and almost beside themselves with excitement; but I do not see men under such circumstances holding each other back, and saying, "Beware of excitement." I never see men who are afraid of the excitement of getting rich suddenly. With respect to all those things which go to the bettering of your physical condition, men believe in enthusiasms, and say, "Strike while the iron is hot." There are all manner of maxims and cautions against delay where there is a chance for gain in material things. But when it comes to religious life; when an old hoary sinner who has defied the Gospel and the Spirit of God for years and years, is caught in the paroxysms of a revival of religion, and begins to manifest excitement in all manner of ways, men say to him, "Now my friend, do not go too fast. Look out, or you will be carried away by excitement." As if he were in any danger on that side of his nature! The man walks along the edge of a precipice, and nobody says a word; but when he walks by the side of a cliff, men say, "Don't tumble up; beware—*beware!*" When a man is excited in worldliness nobody cautions him; but when a man is excited in the direction of more conscience, more love, more self-denial, more purity, more godliness, people take hold of him, and say, "Don't—*don't*—DON'T! That is dangerous excitement." As if men were in danger of being over-pious or over-good! As if that were the besetting sin to which men are addicted!



I tell you, men will never escape from their thralldom if they do not take heed both to their strong hours and to their weak hours. There are given to almost everybody luminous hours. We go on for weeks, sometimes for months, and perhaps even for years, without having any such hours, and then, we do not know why, and without having prepared ourselves for it, on the going down of the sun at the close of some summer day, as we sit, while the crickets and the grasshoppers chirp, and the evening birds sing, a strange softening influence all at once comes over us, and we enter upon a new train of thought, and look over our lives. We think of what we were, of what we have become, and of what our tendencies are. We measure the world by a new standard. The heavens draw near to us. For the time being our grasp on lower things is loosened, and we are drawn upward. We feel all the impulses of a better manhood in us. We lay out the path of the future for ourselves with almost prophetic care. Those are great hours.

When the shipmaster has been driven for days, and for days, and for days, by the black storm that hides the heaven, and prevents his taking an observation, if there come even so much of a break in the clouds that he can see the sun for just ten minutes, it is salvation to him. He would not let it pass for all the world. He stands waiting, and waiting, and waiting, with his instruments all ready, for an opportunity to get an observation, that he may know where he is and what to do.

God gives us royal hours, when the sun comes out, and we can see our condition. There are times when our passions and appetites and lusts, when all our selfish and degrading propensities, lie still, so that our better nature rises into the ascendancy. There come open hours when God lets men see the Sun of righteousness so that they can take their observation, and ascertain where they are, and which way they are going, and how better to lay their course. And men who do not give heed to these luminous hours, do not know what is for their own good. You are not always the same. No man is always the same. Sometimes the strength of a man's life is in his upper feeling, but more often it is in his middle or lower feelings. Why? Because the world gets the first chance at you. You were animal in the beginning. The great basilar instincts are strongest in all of us. Society touches us on a lower plane more frequently than on a higher. Care, and anxiety, and association, and sympathy, and all manner of influences and circumstances, are perpetually tending to keep us down. But now and then there comes a change. By and by the upper faculties rebound, and we have, as it were, a replenishment of divine grace. And for an hour we have an insight

into our real manhood—that for which Christ died, and which is to make us sons of God. The better part of our nature rises up, and then it is that we see visions that are worth seeing, and dream dreams that are worth dreaming. Then it is that we feel the full force of our destiny. Then it is that we mourn over our past lives. Then it is that we hold out feeble and imploring hands for help and succor. Oh! if men knew how to take care of these hours as those poor Ephesians and wandering Jews did who gathered up their instruments of mischief—their amulets, their charms, their writings—and burned them, how much better it would be for them. In these hours is the time to bring all such things and burn them. And let them be burned quick; for the hour may pass, and you may have another mind.

“But,” say men, “ought they not to have waited a little?” No. The probability is that if they had waited till the morrow there would not have been a man that would have burned a book. They were wise enough to take advantage of the impulse to reform when it was on them. Never lose a minute in taking advantage of an opportunity to act in the direction of a higher good or a nobler manhood. Never lose a minute in doing right when the right way is presented to you. Second-thoughts are treasons when an impulse is generous; and when it is base, cruel, animal, second-thoughts are angels of salvation. Never act off-hand when action is wrong; then stop and think; but never fail to act quick when it is right. These men acted on their impulse or conviction instantaneously.

In these times of strength and luminosity men must prepare for the other kind of hours. We usually run between, taking a sort of middle course that is neuter—neither masculine nor feminine; neither pretty good nor pretty bad. Men break into sins which thrall them, which soil them, which subject them to trouble and suffering, in weak hours. And what are they? Everybody has his hours of weakness. Everybody has his hours when it seems to him as though the broad air pushed down on him, and pressed him toward wrong. There are hours of weakness in temper. There are hours of weakness in respect to all that is pure, and just, and true, and good. There are hours when it seems as though the worst powers of the air had full dominion. Many men have it impressed upon them strongly that it is an irresistible temptation of the devil that is about them in weak hours. The vows that men make are often broken in these weak hours. In these weak hours it is that resistance to wrong, which has been going on from week to week, and from month to month, ceases, and the soul goes over into wrong. In these hours of weakness it is that all the reformations



and all the repentances that men have set up, and in which they have made considerable progress, is whelmed and swept away. In these hours it is that men lay up for themselves the fruit of sorrow. Then it is that the passions dominate. Then it is that the flesh triumphs. Then it is that the soul is in prison. Then it is that Satan is in us, and rides there triumphantly.

Beware of these weak hours. And when God gives you hours of clear seeing and a high and heavenly aspiration, see to it that you build up and fortify yourself, so that when weak hours come they shall not be able to sweep you away from the fastenings which you have employed. Take care of the future in strong hours, and do not leave yourself to be carried down into these weak hours without a levee against the sea, and an embankment against the freshet.

After these men had gone out and burned their books, the temptations to go back into a godless life were more than half vanquished. Probably that bed of ashes saved many and many a one from utter destruction.

Many so-called *prudent men* would doubtless have advised differently in regard to these Ephesian converts. Many of them would have said, "There is no objection to your leading a better life; you ought to do it; but do not act with precipitancy. Consider—consider."

My friends, consideration is a good thing; but if I were in a railway car, and had gone over a cliff, and were rolling down, and down, and down, and the stove had begun to pour its coals out, and the flames were beginning to take hold of everything that was combustible, and I saw that there was a chance to get out, I should lose no time in attempting to escape; and if a man should pull me by the skirts, and say, "Consider, my friend, consider," I would say, "Let me get out first, and then I will consider."

Where dangers are suddenly brought to us, there is a sudden inspiration to ward them off. We involuntary start back from a precipice when we find that we have gone too near it. And there ought to be a courage that shall lead us to strike down the robber or assassin that attacks us or our dear ones. And when such a stress is upon us, there is no time for consideration. The blow must be struck at once, or it will be too late.

Suppose, finding your dwelling in flames, and yourself in imminent danger of being consumed or suffocated, you should make haste to escape, and a man should say to you, "It is all right to be concerned about yourself, but consider." Consider? What! when a man stands under an avalanche, and hears the crash coming down,

and runs to get out of its way, and some one says to him "Stop, consider," which is the fool under the circumstances?

When a man sees that there is danger before him, and that he is moving toward it, there is an instinct of self-preservation which is aroused, and which should not be disregarded. And there is a self-preserving instinct given to the spirit as much as to the body. And such a time is a time, not for consideration, but for action. When your soul is in danger, flee. Flee for your life! Do not wait, nor even look back. The very object of haste is to rescue men before the fascination of evil, which has been broken, shall return.

There are bays along rocky coasts. Where promontories stretch out, a bay runs in. When the tide is out, it is charming to walk about on the sand. But when the tide comes in there is danger, unless one is on the alert. For it comes stealing in almost imperceptibly, and often shuts off the promontories long before it runs up into the bay. And if a man is amusing himself there with no heed and no outlook, the insidious tide, which comes in sweet as the blossoming of a flower, but with all the power of the ocean behind it, will overtake him. If he does not flee before the promontories are shut off, he will never flee. It is *now or never* with him.

There is many and many a man hemmed in between two promontories which invite the tide and the ocean. Now is your time to escape. If you wait till the tide comes in, you will be drowned. If there are any here in whom the tide of appetite, or the tide of passion, or the tide of infatuation for gambling, or the tide of corruption, is out, now is the time for you to flee. Do not wait for it to come back again. Be precipitate, and save your souls.

"But," say these prudent men, "why should those creatures have wasted all this valuable property? Why should not those books, which were worth nearly ten thousand dollars—fifty thousand pieces of silver—have been sold in the interest of benevolence? Then the avails might have been taken to relieve the poor. Or, they might have been employed for the support of the Gospel. They might have been devoted to sending more Pauls out preaching in every direction."

Well, has a man a right to put upon another that which it is dangerous for him to keep? What would you think of a reformed assassin who should say, "I have no use any longer for these pistols and daggers, as I am going to join the church; so I will sell them to some other assassin?" For the sake of joining the church, he sells his tools of cruelty.



What would you think of a reformed poisoner who should say, "I have formed the purpose of living a life of morality, and I am going to abandon this life of wickedness, and I have no further use for these medicines; but that man in the other street is going on in the same business, so I will sell them to him, and let him use them"? What sort of reformation would that be?"

A man says, "I have been selling bad liquor, [that is, *all* liquor!] but I find that I am destroying men, and doing much harm, and I feel that I ought to quit." A sense of eternity is aroused in him, and he says, "I must get out of this business. But there is a thousand dollars' worth of stock down cellar. There are a great many barrels of wine there, made according to the best recipes. Besides, there is a great deal of cheap whiskey there that I do not want to waste. Therefore, I will just sell this stock. Then I will join the church." You laugh at it, and justly, too.

What would you think of a gambler that had reformed, who for the sake of putting money in his pocket should sell his loaded dice to other gamblers that had not reformed?

My friends, there is an influence which goes out from a man such that he never does anything that he does not leave some magnetism in it. I do not believe that a man builds a house without putting into it something of himself. I do not believe a man ever wrote a sentence, or painted a picture, that he did not leave much of himself in that picture or sentence. No good painter ever painted the portrait of another person that he did not leave something of himself in that portrait. And no man uses any implement that he does not put something of himself into that implement. There is what we call *association*. There is a fascination in things by which we have sinned. And they are dangerous things to have lying about you. Places where you have been lured and snared are dangerous places for you to go into when you are reformed. It is dangerous for you to mingle with the persons with whom you have been associated in sin, and who remain in their sins. One thing is certain, that when a man is reformed he should do with his instruments of evil what is done with the raiment of patients who have died in hospital—*burn them*. I would not put on the clothes of a man who had died of small-pox. It would be bad business and poor economy. Whatever you have used or been associated with in sin, cut loose from and destroy when you have reformed, for the sake of your own protection, and the protection of others. Sinning is a terrible thing when once it takes hold of a man, and comes to be his master, and the power of breaking off from sin is very much diminished by the presence

of those things which have made sin facile. When, therefore, you enter upon a new, a reformed, a moral or religious life, having been living in the commission of things wrong, do not make any compromise with implements, companions or places. Keep away from them.

“The prudent man forseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.”

These men, therefore, did the right thing. They destroyed so much property, to be sure; but what was it worth compared with their safety, integrity, and Christian manhood? Can a man be weighed against gold? You may heap gold mountain high, but it is not the price of a man. The gold of Ophir or the golden wedge, is not to be mentioned in comparison with a man. Burning was the safest thing. When a man repents of wrong-doing and sets his face in the right direction, he ought to destroy utterly all chance of retracing his steps. When a man reforms, he ought to burn all the bridges behind him, so that he cannot get back. He will need all the help that he can find. When you first begin to turn from evil to good, from selfishness to benevolence, from carnality to spirituality; when you begin to turn from yourselves to God, in the first moment of your reformation, it seems to you as though you never could be tempted again; but ah! there come December days. There come days in which it seems as though Satan was tempting you on every side. There come days when men are ashamed that they have been duped, as they say, into reformation. Take heed. You may be destroyed unless you are fortified beforehand. I warn you. There cannot but be many in such a congregation as this who need to hear just such talk as I am addressing to you this evening. There are many men on the precipitous edge of dangers which will certainly compass their destruction if they do not change their course; at once.

There may be those here who have contemplated some wrong which is not yet committed; there may be those who have laid plans for the commission of some robbery; there may be those who have formed the intention of falsifying some document or perverting some trust-fund; there may be those who are about to enter the house of death from which, if men go in, they will never return, or will come out struck through with deadly poison; and if you would save yourselves from the fatal consequences of these things, you must stop right where you are. If you go any further, the probability is that your ruin will be complete. There are courses that will whelm your soul in destruction here and hereafter, and these are some of them.



Oh, my friends, let the Spirit of God overshadow you; and if better thoughts have been impressed on you while I have been speaking, do not let one hour pass without fortifying them. We learned in the last war that it was wise not to go to battle in line if we could help it. And whenever our boys camped down in a place, not twenty minutes elapsed before they had thrown up dirt, rails, fences, logs, anything for a bulwark, or a breastwork, to protect them from the fire of the enemy.

You are on the enemy's ground. You need some breastwork which shall resist the assault of your adversaries, and behind which you will be safe. Turn to your companion as you go out to-night, and say, "Give me your hand on this: I am going to begin a new life." Go to some one in whom you have confidence, and tell him how near you have come to destruction, and say to him, "Indorse me." Go home and make your wife a partner of your dangers, which she may not have suspected. And above all things, seek the protection of God, who will help you as no human being can. And commit yourself before men. Do not stand dallying and parleying. Do not not say, "If I succeed, I will let it be known." Let it be known that you *may* succeed.

Many and many a man has been destroyed with utter destruction because he would not open his lips; though he might have been saved when he was tempted beyond his strength of resistance, if he had turned round and said, "Oh, my God! help me;" and if he had sought help from his fellow-men. When a man is in peril and extremity of temptation he needs help. There is no power in himself that can save him.

You poor secret drunkards; you men that are hiding your lascivious ways; you that have been corrupted with the damning fascination of gambling; you whose midnight, if it could talk, would be like the day of judgment—to you I speak to-night. There is a time coming for you. There is a bright and morning star rising over the horizon of your darkness. You may be saved from death. Turn to somebody; open your mouth; confess your sin; flee from danger; and be redeemed forever and forever. God will be glad in the gladness of your soul. And when you stand, at last, among the redeemed, heaven cannot shudder, but you will look back with a joy that trembles to see how near you were to utter destruction, but how by the grace of God you were snatched from it, and saved with an everlasting salvation.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Our Father, we thank thee that we may call to thee, and be recognized by thee. Thou art our Father, and we are thy children. Though we are unworthy to draw near to thee, and enter into personal relations and associations with thee, yet thou art fashioning us by thy providence and by thy grace for that future meeting, for that heavenly home, for that blessed estate, to which we aspire. Through darkness and through light we press on. Through hopes and through fears, with strength and with weakness, under temptations and in victories, cast down and lifted up again, hoping against hope, full of courage, through all vicissitudes, we still press forward. And though at times we cannot run; though at times, as they that suddenly are met by the blasts of the storm, we cannot more than stand and hold our own, and having done all, stand; yet when the storm abates, we press on, always forward, always for something better—for truer and better lives; always aspiring, not accounting ourselves to have attained, but pressing forward toward the mark for our high calling in Christ Jesus.

We pray, O Lord our God, that thou wilt forgive all our sinfulness. Pity our infirmity. Help our weakness. Cheer our despondency. By the greatness of thy love and help may all our weakness be filled with strength; and by the grace of God may we be able to obtain victories in every hour, and against every foe. We are glad that we live in thee, and by thee. It is better for us to live with a grateful remembrance of thy kindness, than to think that we alone achieve our victories. We rejoice that our blessings are from thy hand, and that they are not only blessings, but tokens of thy love; and that we have not only their ministrations, but the sweet associations of thy care and fatherly regard.

May we look upon all the events of our daily life, and all the changes of providence around about us, as so many tokens of God's thought and God's kindness; and so may we behold thee in our history on every side continuously. As the days go on, as that part of our existence which is in this life shortens, and as that which is eternal draws near to us, may we find ourselves more and more in the spirit of the life that is to come.

We pray for all those who are under temptations; for all those who are controlled thereby. We pray for those who from day to day go through the ways where lurk innumerable adversaries. Save them from the adder that biteth. Save them from the snares which entangle. Save them from the fiery adversary. Save them from fear. Save them from outrushing, lion-like temptations that destroy. Save them from every peril. Thou that didst suffer for them; thou that didst, in Gethsemane, in thine own anguish, remember them; thou that didst rescue and strengthen them in the dark hour; thou that didst send ministering angels that comforted them, look upon those who are in peril. Forget them not. Breathe heavenly strength into their souls. Do exceeding abundantly more for them than we can ask or think.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt be gracious unto all those who have been carried away captive. Bring back thy people from Babylon. Bring them again into the lands of their fathers.

O, that thou wouldst open hearts long sealed to the truth! O, that thou wouldst break the light of fear and alarm upon many that sit at ease, and feel secure in times of danger! We pray that thou wilt stir up the consciences of men who are living in sin to a sense of their guilt; and out of fear and trembling guilt may there go forth holy vows, resolutions, reformations, and purifications of life. We pray that thou wilt turn back from wrong courses many who seem bent upon their own destruction. Save those who



are in the beginnings of fatal ways, and to whose lips is brought that deceptive cup at the bottom of which is deadly poison.

We pray, O Lord our God, that many may be rescued from evil; that many may be turned back from vice; that many may be delivered from the snare of the tempter. May thy name be glorified in thy people. May they be augmented and strengthened, that the cause of truth and purity and justice among men may be carried forward to a blessed consummation.

We pray, O Lord, that the word spoken to-night may be to edification. Bless us in our songs of praise, in our prayers, and in our desires one toward another. Go with us from this sacred place; and may the Sabbath go with us all the week, a conveying and overshadowing cloud when the sun is fierce. Grant that the spirit of the sanctuary may be with us in all our temptations wherever we are. May we see with the clarity of the light of thy truth. And when we shall have finished our earthly life, may we not be unwilling to go as children sent for to come home. And may dying be living to us. And beyond may we rise to see thee, and to see that thou hast encircled those who have gone from our midst. May we join our loved ones in heaven, and dwell forever with the Lord.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit, forevermore. *Amen.*

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### PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt bless the word which has been spoken. How many have perished for lack of vision! How many have been lost through foolishness! How many have been destroyed by reason of weakness! How many have come to naught from ignorance of how to save themselves when soul-sick, and heart-sick, and sick unto death! O, Saviour of sinners! hast thou no salvation until men are reformed? Lord Jesus, was not thy hand pierced that thou mightest succor the weak and the perishing? Since thou didst triumph over death, is there anything in the lazar-house of death that thou canst not cure? Look upon the imperiled. Look upon the wandering outcast. Look upon the secretly corrupt and wicked. Look upon thy needy ones. O, thou Father of mercy, grant, to-night, that there may be many who shall stop, and stop suddenly, and renounce openly and thoroughly their evil ways, and begin that upward life which shall never end. We commend to thy grace, O God, in Jesus Christ, all these dying men. And we pray for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon them. We pray for the confirmation of their better resolutions. Raise up about them those who shall watch for them, in sympathy, and prayer, and labor, and zeal, and love. Be with those that need these helps. So glorify thyself, and so save men. We ask it through riches of grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*





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